



## GROWING HOPE 2025

Thank you to all who joined Achieving Cures Together in September to celebrate our 10-year anniversary at Growing Hope. Thanks to the incredible generosity of the ACT community and corporate sponsors, we raised over \$200,000 towards Microbiota Transplant Therapy research and treatments. The evening included award-winning wine, a gourmet al fresco dinner including a hand-crafted charcuterie buffet, and scenic views from the Winery at Sovereign Estates. The celebration showcased live jazz music from Craig T and the Meritage Trio, complimentary professional photos from VIP photography, and concluded with a custom live drone show sponsored by Rebyl Vans. Throughout the social hour researchers were available to discuss their research and answer guest questions. ACT was honored to host multiple guest speakers during the program. Dr. Alexander Khoruts illustrated the growth and progress of microbiota transplant research and the promise it holds for the future. Dr. Cyrus Jahansouz highlighted his research and clinical practice improving patient recovery after gastrointestinal surgery. Lynn Murphy reflected on her health journey living with a congenital pancreatic defect, battling recurring pancreatitis and *C. difficile* infections, with recovery through surgery and Microbiota Transplant Therapy at the University of Minnesota. Watch the full program recording or individual speaker clips at [www.achievingcures.com/2025growinghope](http://www.achievingcures.com/2025growinghope).



### 2025 ROBERT E. WILKENS AWARD WINNER

Robert Wilkens was a loving grandparent of ACT founder, Peter Westerhaus and an early supporter of Achieving Cures Together and the restorative power of microbial restoration. Each year since his passing in 2018, ACT presents the Robert E. Wilkens award to a community member whose passion, determination, and commitment to microbiota research has made a lasting impact advancing ACT's mission. ACT is honored to present this year's award to Katerina Helebrantova. Katerina's compassion, enthusiasm, and positivity have been a pillar of support for her husband, Dr. Alexander Khoruts, and the entire University of Minnesota Microbiota Therapeutics program.



### ULCERATIVE COLITIS CLINICAL TRIAL SUPPORT

In 2025, Achieving Cures Together provided funding to fully support the first year of Dr. Byron Vaughn's upcoming Ulcerative Colitis clinical trial at the University of Minnesota. The clinical trial investment of over \$105,000 was made possible through a generous donation match from the Westerhaus family. Thank you to the Westerhaus family and the entire ACT community for your continued support in advancing Microbiota Transplant Therapy and making this clinical trial possible.



### INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE WEBINAR

This fall, ACT hosted a webinar featuring Dr. Byron Vaughn, gastroenterologist and lead investigator of multiple Inflammatory Bowel Disease clinical trials at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Vaughn detailed distinguishing factors between Ulcerative Colitis and Crohn's Disease, progress being made in Microbiota Transplant Therapy (MTT) research in respect to each condition, and questions guiding new research projects. In Crohn's Disease, Dr. Vaughn presented findings from multiple studies, including a trial administering MTT after surgical resection or removal of inflamed intestinal tissue. Dr. Vaughn has learned in his Crohn's Disease research that "any form of MTT seems to lead to a short-term improvement in symptoms" for these patients. In his most recent Ulcerative Colitis clinical trial, Dr. Vaughn saw a dramatic clinical response. Forty-six percent of patients who received MTT had symptom improvement, compared to seven percent of patients who received placebo.

A new Ulcerative Colitis clinical trial is being prepared and a new Crohn's Disease trial is underway, if you are interested in learning more about either clinical trial, please reach out to us at [info@achievingcures.com](mailto:info@achievingcures.com). A recording of the webinar is also available for viewing at: <https://www.achievingcures.com/2025ibdwebinar>.

### TWIN CITIES MARATHON 2025



ACT hosted our 10th charity team for the Twin Cities Marathon this past fall! ACT's dedicated team and community raised over \$7,000 for the advancement of Microbiota Transplant Therapy. Our 2025 team included eighteen runners in the 10-mile race, half-marathon, and marathon races. We are incredibly proud and inspired by their hard work and commitment to running for a cause. If you're interested in running with ACT next year, stay tuned for updates on the 2026 Twin Cities Marathon, including new early-bird Charity Program race registration.

### REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR COLFAX 2026!

Join Achieving Cures Together and the Run for Nana community in scenic Denver, Colorado May 16th and 17th to run for a mission. Registration is now open with early-bird pricing discounts for Colfax race weekend. Run (or walk) whatever distance you prefer: marathon, half-marathon, urban 10-miler, and 5K. Get more details and registration instructions at [www.achievingcures.com/2026colfaxmarathon](http://www.achievingcures.com/2026colfaxmarathon).





### MEET THE NEWEST ADDITION TO THE ACT TEAM: MEGAN SENDEN

My name is Megan Senden and I am the newest member of the ACT team as the Marketing and Development Intern! I am currently a master’s candidate at the University of Minnesota working towards a Master of Public Health with a focus in Public Health Administration and Policy. I am so proud to be a part of the ACT team and advocate for the organization and the life-saving research being done through our partnerships!

### MICROBIOTA THERAPEUTICS RESEARCH

*Dr. Alexander Khoruts, Director of the University of Minnesota Microbiota Therapeutics Program*  
*Christie Lansdowne, Executive Director, Achieving Cures Together*

Research into the gut microbiome and its critical functions in human health continues to advance worldwide. However, the challenges extend beyond mere scientific or technical. The regulatory agencies have a huge impact on the pace of discovery and access of life-saving therapies to patients. A major concern for patients and providers is access to microbiota transplants for patients with severe forms of *C. difficile* infections and pediatric patients. Ironically, these most vulnerable patients lost this access following FDA approval of fecal microbiota-based products for prevention of recurrent *C. difficile* infections in adult patients. In the United States, the FDA has designated microbiota transplants to be a drug. Unfortunately, the commercialization of a drug in the United States is a very resource intensive process, typically requiring \$100 million or more. The money feeds an entire ecosystem of processes beyond mere drug manufacturing, including institutions that profit from clinical trials and a multitude of certifiers, reviewers, and regulators. Even a good deal of the FDA budget depends on various fees it charges from drug companies for regulating them.

The complexities and impact of the differing regulatory policies are outlined in my editorial article, “The Challenges and Opportunities in the Expanding Horizons of Microbiota Transplant Therapy” published in professional journal, Gut Microbes: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19490976.2025.2559032>. The article contrasts the regulatory policies in the United States with that in the European Union, which has designated fecal microbiota transplants as a Substance of Human Origin (SoHo), which is much closer to the rules regulating blood banking, and prioritizes patient safety and access to therapy instead of the interests of big drug companies.

Despite these difficulties, the Microbiota Therapeutics Program in partnership with Achieving Cures Together continues to be a major driver of discovery by being the central manufacturing hub for academic clinical trials that explore Microbiota Transplant Therapies for the following indications:

#### Cancer Recovery

- Complications of Bone Marrow Transplantation (*Fred Hutchison Cancer Center*)
- Checkpoint Inhibitor Colitis (*University of Minnesota, University of Pittsburgh & Seattle*)
- Refractory Lymphoma (*City of Hope Medical Center*)

#### Gut-Brain Connection

- Alcohol Cravings (*Richmond, VA*)
- ALS - Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (*Duke University*)
- Autism (*Arizona State University*)
- Hepatic Encephalopathy (*Richmond, VA*)
- Pitt Hopkins Disease (*Arizona State University*)

#### Cardiovascular Health

- Congestive Heart Failure (*Columbia University*)
- Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension (*University of Minnesota*)

#### Digestive System Disorders

- Celiac Disease (*University of Minnesota*)
- Crohn’s Disease (*Multi-Center led by the University of Minnesota*)
- Children’s Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (*University of Minnesota*)
- Gastrointestinal Surgery Recovery (*University of Minnesota*)
- Ulcerative Colitis (*University of Minnesota*)

#### Immune System Disorders

- Alopecia Areata (*Columbia University*)
- Food Allergies (*Boston Children’s Hospital*)
- Hidradenitis Suppurativa (*University of Minnesota*)

#### Antibiotic Resistance

- Multi-Drug Antibiotic Resistance (*Emory University*)
- Recurrent *C. difficile* Infections (*University of Minnesota*)

We also continue to hope for progress toward more nuanced regulatory policies in the United States. During the summer representatives of the American Gastroenterological Association (including Dr. Khoruts) and patient advocates met with the FDA commissioner Dr. Marty Makary, who expressed understanding and genuine concern for patients who may be falling through the cracks.

### TEN-YEARS OF ACHIEVING CURES TOGETHER

Achieving Cures Together is committed to saving and enhancing lives through the advancement of microbiome research and by advocating for patient access to safe and effective microbiota therapies. We are proud of the immense progress we’ve made over the past 10-years and ask for your partnership as we advance this new frontier of medicine, bring hope to patients and families, and ultimately save lives. Thank you for your consideration of ACT in your year-end giving, you can make a gift online at [www.achievingcures.com/donate](http://www.achievingcures.com/donate), by mail or via stock. Please reach out to us at [info@achievingcures.com](mailto:info@achievingcures.com) with any questions.

